

The Liturgy as the Work of the Spirit: Synopsis

I. The Spirit and the Church

From ancient times, the church has recognized the close connection between the Spirit and the church. This connection can only be properly understood in terms of the revelation of the God as Trinity.

The Trinity is revealed in “the two sendings”: the sending of Jesus Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Jesus’ distinction from and identity with God creates a uniquely Christian conception of God. N.T. Wright:

Jesus of Nazareth was conscious of a vocation: a vocation, given him by the one he knew as ‘father’, to enact in himself what, in Israel’s scriptures, God had promised to accomplish all by himself. He would be the pillar of cloud and fire for the people of the new Exodus. He would embody in himself the returning and redeeming action of the covenant God.

The sending of the Spirit creates a new understanding and completes the Trinitarian story

The Farewell Discourse

Pentecost is precisely the story of the coming of the Spirit *to the church*. Thus the full Trinitarian story includes the church.

Barthian pneumatology distances the Spirit from the church

Orthodox pneumatology gives us a better understanding of the relationship between the Spirit in the church: an *epicletic* relationship

II. The Paradoxes of the Liturgy

The Spirit and the church as existing in a paradoxical relationship:

The church is constituted by the Spirit and pneumatologically conditioned

Spirit comes from “beyond history” (Zizioulas) and therefore not within the church’s control

The Spirit takes on an ecclesial “shape”

Spirit experiences a “kenosis” in the church

Ralph de Colle:

The economy of the Holy Spirit follows that of the Son because the Spirit is the image of the Son even as the Son is the image of the Father. The Holy Spirit is the only divine person who does not have an image in another person of the trinity. This is why the Holy Spirit remains hidden even in the work of redemption.

The image of the Holy Spirit, not borne by another divine person, becomes actual in created persons... through his deifying work. In this sense the ministry of the Holy Spirit is associated with ecclesiology; some even make the argument that ecclesiology is best understood when it is a branch of pneumatology

The triune economy reaches its goal in the economy of the Holy Spirit, who like the Son undergoes his own kenosis in a temporal mission. Just as the Son emptied himself by

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becoming flesh through the union of his hypostasis to a human nature, so, too, the Holy Spirit empties himself by indwelling human hypostases through the impartation of uncreated grace. The former unifies common human nature in the one hypostasis of the Son; the latter diversifies God's gifts among many human persons or hypostases.

The mystery of the Spirit in the church—the mystery of the third article of the Creed—is actualized in the liturgy.

III. The Work of the Spirit in the Work of the People

The Spirit works in and through the liturgically oriented “core practices” of the church, i.e., through the works of the people of God.

Luther's seven “marks” of the church: word, baptism, Lord's Supper, the keys, church offices, worship, cross-bearing.

Spirit ties himself to the core practices. This understanding is the foundation of sacramental theology and practice. Synergy implied.

Synergy

Synergy not an explanation of how divine and human wills are related, but a “mystery of the coincidence of grace and human freedom in good works, without recourse to positive and rational terms” (Lossky).

Part of *imago Dei*

Epiclesis

The supreme synergy in the liturgy is the *epiclesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit especially in the eucharistic celebration.

Epiclesis implies a continuous coming of the Spirit to the church. It should challenge the church to pray continuously for a “perpetual Pentecost.”

Question of prayer *to* the Holy Spirit

Active participation

The whole people of God called to “active participation”

The Pentecostal contribution